

Internationalization of Higher Education in China and Indonesia: A Bibliometric Analysis

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Abstract

This study aims to provide a thorough knowledge mapping and an in-depth analysis of studies on the internationalization of higher education in China and Indonesia. It presents a visual analysis of 65 research articles listed in Google Scholar and Scopus databases between the years 2020 and 2025 in the field in both countries. To identify issues in the reviewed articles, knowledge mapping was performed using VOSviewer which includes co-occurrence and keyword analysis. Findings revealed that China has a significantly larger volume of research focused on the internationalization of higher education. Key themes identified in the Chinese context include international student, English Medium Instruction (EMI), international student mobility, Belt and Road Initiatives (BRI), World-Class University (WCU), transnational higher education, Confucianism, international education, Double First Class (DFC), Tianxia, nation branding, and intercultural competence. Meanwhile, Indonesia has a more limited body of literature, with emerging themes such as international education, student mobility, World-Class University (WCU), national identity, and international collaboration.

Keywords: Internationalization, Higher Education, China, Indonesia, Bibliometric Analysis, VOSviewer

Introduction

Higher education plays a pivotal role in guiding national development and equipping societies to navigate the demands of globalization. As nations strive to achieve sustainable economic growth, social equity, and political stability, the quality and accessibility of higher education emerge as crucial determinants for success. Universities and colleges are essential in fostering innovation, nurturance of critical thinking, and enhancing human capital¹, which are crucial elements for promoting national advancement. In a world that is becoming increasingly interconnected, an education populace boosts a nation's competitiveness, efficiency, and capability to respond to swift technological shifts². It also encourages social mobility, enabling individuals from various backgrounds to elevate their circumstances and engage constructively with society³. Moreover, higher education is instrumental in

¹ Tommaso Agasisti and Olesya Petrenko, "Higher Education and Economic Development: A Bibliometric Analysis 1985–2022," *European Journal of Education* 59, no. 3 (September 1, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12653>; OECD, "What Proportion of Teachers Leave the Teaching Profession?," *Education at a Glance* (OECD, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1787/bcc79d57-en>.

² Alison MacKenzie, Tien Hui Chiang, and Allen Thurston, "The Human Development and Capability Approach: A Counter Theory to Human Capital Discourse in Promoting Low SES Students' Agency in Education," *International Journal of Educational Research* 117 (January 1, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2022.102121>; Agasisti and Petrenko, "Higher Education and Economic Development: A Bibliometric Analysis 1985–2022."

³ Muhammad Husni Arifin, "The Role of Higher Education in Promoting Social Mobility in Indonesia," vol. 6, 2017; "Universities and Social Mobility: Summary Report," 2021.

reinforcing democratic processes⁴, given that knowledgeable citizens are better prepared to involve themselves in governance and advocate collective welfare.

In the light of the significant role higher education serves in addressing the issues brought on by globalization, it becomes vital to examine cross-cultural approach within this area. Globalization has led to an increasingly interconnected world, whereby cultural interactions and international collaboration are essential for social, economic, and academic progress⁵. As nations encounter global challenges, higher education systems must adapt by fostering broader and more inclusive perspectives that transcend cultural boundaries. Conducting a cross-cultural study in internationalization of higher education holds significant relevance for countries such as China and Indonesia. These nations are undergoing rapid economic growth and transformations in their educational systems with unique characteristics, and a comparative analysis yield valuable insights into the enhancements needed in their respective higher education systems. Employing a bibliometric analysis, this study compares internationalization of higher education in both countries.

Higher education plays an integral role in fostering a nation's development. Beyond its impact on individual growth and employability, it significantly influences a nation's social, economic, and political landscape. A central point found in various literature is that higher education significantly propels economic development. Studies have consistently indicated that investment in higher education generates considerable economic returns for both at the individual and national levels⁶. Studies showed that higher education institutions contribute to economic growth by fostering innovation and entrepreneurship, as well as cultivating human capital, all of which are vital for sustaining economic prosperity⁷ in the knowledge-based economy, establishing new industries, and boosting productivity⁸.

Moreover, in developed countries, evidence suggests that expanding higher education access enhances productivity levels. A report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) highlights that countries with a larger percentage of graduate experience faster economic growth, as these individuals frequently occupy higher-value roles within the labor market. Furthermore, in the current interconnected world, Higher Education Institutions

⁴ David John Frank, "Higher Education for Democracy : The Role of the University in Civil Society," *Contemporary Sociology* 52, no. 2 (2023): 183–85, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00943061231155321jj>.

⁵ Irma Wani Othman et al., "The Importance of Global Collaboration in Empowering Higher Education and Cultivating Holistic Graduate Leadership," *International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling* 8, no. 49 (2023): 57–76, <https://doi.org/10.35631/ijepc.849005>; Jihad Jaafar Waham, Asfahani Asfahani, and Risa Alfiah Ulfa, "Global Trends in Higher Education: A Comparative Analysis of Enrollment and Quality Assurance Mechanisms," *International Journal of Educational Research* 1, no. 1 (2023): 49–60, <https://edujavare.com/index.php/EDUJAVARE>.

⁶ Agasisti and Petrenko, "Higher Education and Economic Development: A Bibliometric Analysis 1985–2022."

⁷ Lorenzo Compagnucci and Francesca Spigarelli, "The Third Mission of the University: A Systematic Literature Review on Potentials and Constraints," *Technological Forecasting & Social Change* 161 (2020): 1–30, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0040162520311100>; Agasisti and Petrenko, "Higher Education and Economic Development: A Bibliometric Analysis 1985–2022."

⁸ (Gao et al., 2019)

(HEIs) also holds a growing significance in tackling sustainability issues⁹. In essence, HEIs play a key role in generating innovative knowledge and technology to contribute to societal development at the local, national, and global levels.

Numerous pressing issues of our era, as stated earlier, necessitate the collective effort of the global community, and higher education institutions are often at the forefront of researching solutions and developing innovative strategies to address them¹⁰. Therefore, interconnection and collaboration among universities globally is essential to be examined. For this reason, there is a need to discuss cross-cultural approaches in higher education internationalization. In this study, the cross-cultural approach in higher education refers to how the education system adopts and integrates elements from various cultures to create an inclusive and global learning environment. It focuses on the internationalization efforts and policies that foster global collaboration, curriculum and culture integration, as well as challenges and opportunities that higher education institutions encounter concerning internationalization.

Internationalization and related policies have a central role in shaping how institutions engage with the global academic community. Through policies that encourage joint research initiatives, and international partnerships, higher education institutions become key actors in global knowledge exchange. Understanding how different countries implement and manage these policies reveals both common trends and localized strategies in global engagement. Discussing the intersection of culture and curriculum is also vital in cross-cultural studies, as educational values, pedagogical approaches, and curriculum content are deeply rooted in cultural contexts. Analyzing how curricula are developed and adapted across cultures allows researchers to assess the extent to which higher education systems are inclusive, globally relevant, and sensitive to local traditions and identities. Meanwhile, a focus on challenges and opportunities provides a balanced perspective on the evolution of higher education in diverse settings. Institutions worldwide face pressures in facing globalization; however, it offers opportunities for innovation, capacity building, and international recognition. Studying these dynamics helps stakeholders anticipate future trends and design adaptive, culturally responsive strategies.

This cross-cultural investigation will not only assist China and Indonesia adapt to the demands of a globalized environment but will also foster mutual understanding and strengthen international partnerships in education. Gaining an understanding of the advantages and shortcomings of each nation's approach to the internationalization of higher education enables policymakers and academic

⁹ (Filho et al., 2023)

¹⁰ Maia Chankseliani, Ikboljon Qoraboyev, and Dilbar Gimranova, "Higher Education Contributing to Local, National, and Global Development: New Empirical and Conceptual Insights," *Higher Education* 81, no. 1 (January 1, 2021): 109–27, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-020-00565-8>; Nazifa Abd Ghani et al., "Bibliometric Analysis of Global Research Trends on Higher Education Internationalization Using Scopus Database: Towards Sustainability of Higher Education Institutions," *Sustainability (Switzerland)* 14, no. 14 (July 1, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14148810>; Zhiyang Zhong, Gaoming Zheng, and Yan Wang, "Impact of Transnational Research Collaboration on Universities' Innovation Performance: Panel Data Research of 64 Chinese Universities from 2009 to 2019," *Sustainability (Switzerland)* 15, no. 1 (January 1, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15010083>; Maria Jakubik, "Role of Higher Education in Solving Global Problems," *International Journal of Management, Knowledge and Learning* 11 (October 5, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.53615/2232-5697.11.285-295>.

authorities to develop strategies to enhance their educational offerings, improve international collaborations, and better prepare their students for the global workforce.

Methods

This study employs bibliometric analysis to examine journal articles discussing the internationalization of higher education in China and Indonesia. The search process was carried out through Google Scholar and Scopus databases with keyword “Internationalization of Higher Education AND China OR Indonesia”. The publication date was set from 2020 to 2025. The initial search resulted in a total of 520 publications relevant to the topic. The inclusion criteria were peer-reviewed journal articles published in English. The exclusion criteria eliminated books, conference proceedings, and reports. Upon applying these criteria, a total of 65 articles were selected with 53 articles for the Chinese context, and 12 for the Indonesian context. A summary of the comprehensive search information is presented in table 1.

Table 1. Detailed of the Search Information

Criteria	Description
Source website	Google Scholar, Scopus
Years	2020 – 2025
Search terms	“Internationalization of higher education AND China OR Indonesia”
Inclusion criteria	Peer-reviewed articles
Exclusion criteria	Proceeding papers, Book Chapters, Report
Sample size	65
Reference size	3183

Results

The network visualization created by VOSViewer highlights key aspects related to the internationalization of higher education in China and Indonesia identified in the existing literature. These include international students, transnational higher education, English Medium Instruction (EMI), nation branding, globalization, tianxia, international education, student mobility, humanities and social science, online learning, pedagogy, transnational education, academic mobility, and Chinese academic. The results are presented in Figure 1 as follows.

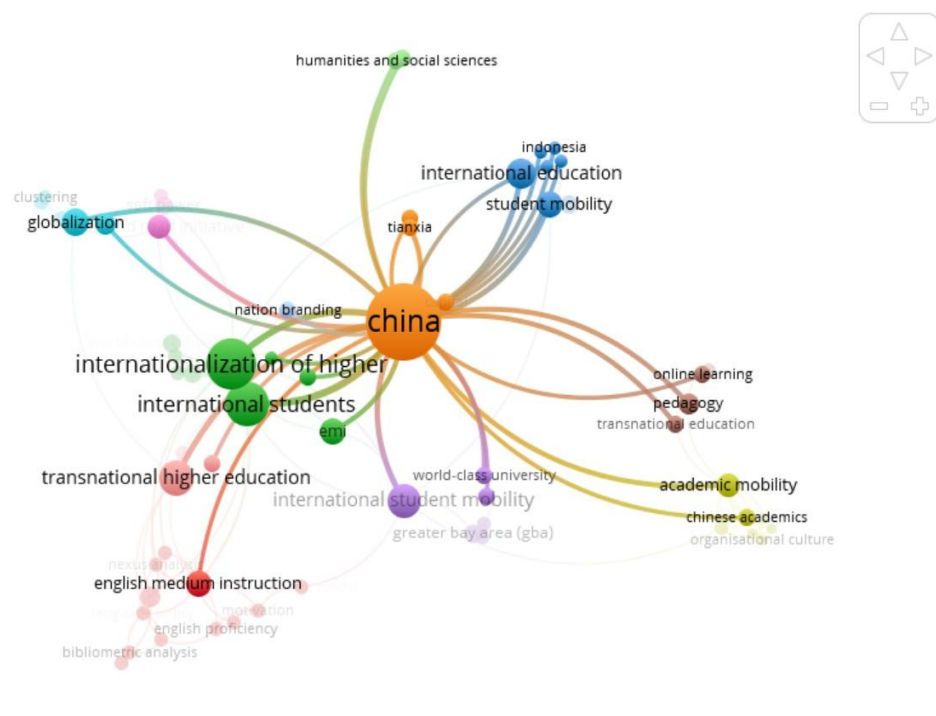


Figure 1 Network Visualization of Internationalization of Higher Education in China and Indonesia

The aspects of internationalization of higher education identified in both countries are further elaborated in the findings of each country’s case as follows.

The Case of Internationalization of Higher Education in China

Based on the review, China has many factors related to the internationalization of its higher education. Figure 2 shows the result of network visualization for the Chinese context.

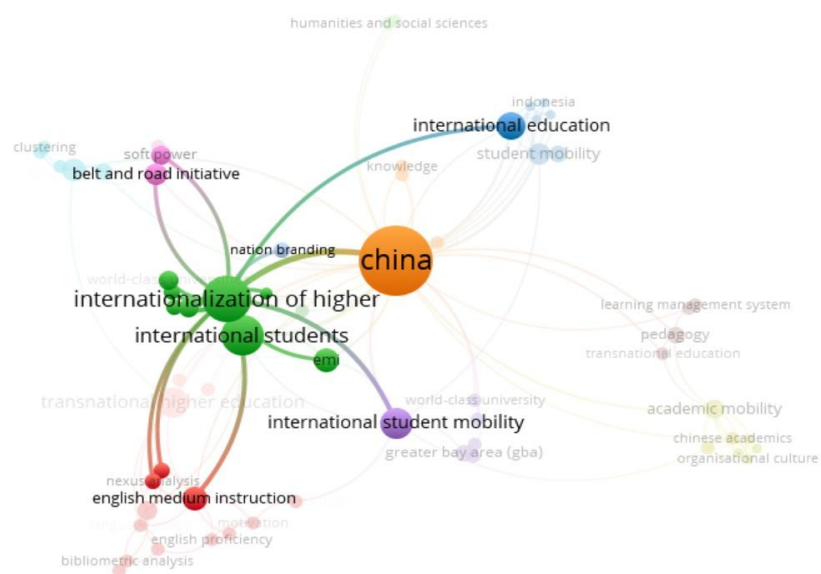


Figure 2. Network Visualization of Internationalization of Higher Education in China

Network visualization created by VOSViewer identified several key issues in publications regarding the internationalization of higher education in China involving international students, international student mobility, English Medium Instruction (EMI), nation branding, belt and road initiative (BRI), and international education. Several other factors identified within a cluster with the term 'China' were tianxia, Double First Class (DFC), intercultural competence, World Class University (WCU), Confucianism, and transnational higher education. The occurrence of the terms in the publications is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Key Issues and Number of Publication on Internationalization of Higher Education in China

Key issues	Number of Publication
International students	60 articles
English Medium Instruction (EMI)	21 articles
International student mobility	14 articles
Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)	11 articles
World Class University (WCU)	10 articles
Transnational higher education	10 articles
Confucianism	9 articles
International education	5 articles
Double First Class (DFC)	4 articles
Tianxia	3 articles
Nation branding	2 articles
Intercultural competence	2 articles

The Case of Internationalization of Higher Education in Indonesia

As previously mentioned, there were relatively few publications discussing the internationalization of higher education in Indonesia, with limited coverage of key themes. Figure 3 shows the result of network visualization for the Indonesian context.

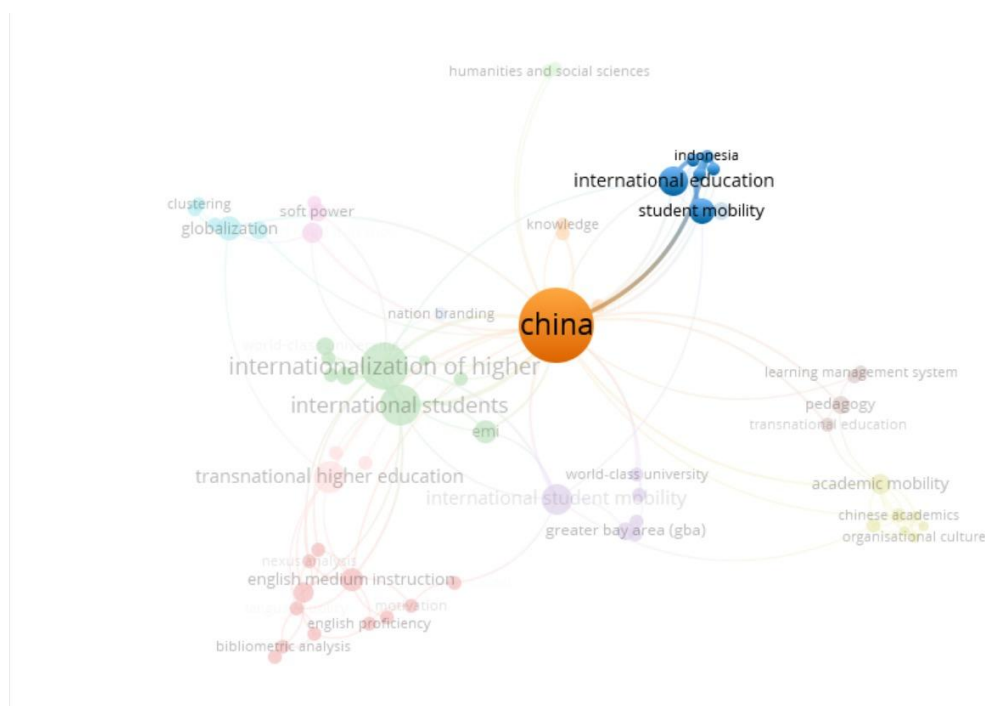


Figure 3. Network Visualization of Internationalization of Higher Education in Indonesia

The review revealed that Indonesia has relatively few factors related to the internationalization of higher education. As shown in Figure 3, only two key issues were prominently identified: international education and student mobility. However, several additional themes emerged within the cluster associated with the term “Indonesia,” including World-Class University (WCU), national identity, and international collaboration. The occurrence of the terms in the reviewed publications is presented in table 3.

Table 3. Key Issues and Number of Publication on Internationalization of Higher Education in Indonesia

Key issues	Number of Publication
International education	20 articles
Student mobility	3 articles
World-Class University	3 articles
National Identity	2 articles
International Collaboration	2 articles

Discussion

The key issues identified in the literature on the internationalization of higher education in China and Indonesia are categorized into three main areas: policies and strategies, curriculum and cultural integration, and challenges and opportunities in the internationalization of higher education.

a) Internationalization of Higher Education Policies and Strategies

During the 1970s, higher education institutions started to integrate an international perspective into their agendas¹¹. Since then, there has been a global shift toward establishing World Class Universities (WCU) around the world¹², which are vital for nurturing talent and driving innovation in a knowledge-based economy¹³. China has been actively participated in this movement. In its efforts to enhance the quality of higher education and boost the global competitiveness of its universities, China has initiated various policies and strategies.

One of the policies is the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) launched in 2013. It has become a key force in the internationalization of China's higher education. The BRI promotes academic exchanges, international student mobility, and institutional cooperation with partner countries across Asia, Africa, Europe, and beyond¹⁴. The 2016 Education Action Plan by China's Ministry of Education emphasized people-to-people diplomacy as central to building educational community under the BRI¹⁵. Aligned with national strategies like the Double First-Class Project (DFC) and Greater Bay Area development, BRI enhances China's soft power and positions it as a leader in global higher education¹⁶.

Another key policy supporting the internationalization of higher education in China is the Double First-Class (DFC) Project launched in 2015 to replace the 211 and 985 Projects¹⁷. This project highlights the importance of increasing transnational research collaboration activities, as well as improving the quality and competitiveness of Chinese Universities on global scale¹⁸. The term Double First-Class refers to both First-Class Universities and First-Class Disciplines¹⁹. This approach is part of China's national development strategy, aiming at transforming

¹¹ Juan José Prieto-Gutiérrez, "The Internationalization of Higher Education Beyond 2030," *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Leadership Studies* 5, no. 3 (September 1, 2024): 193–98, <https://doi.org/10.61186/johepal.5.3.193>.

¹² Kiyong Byun, Jae Eun Jon, and Dongbin Kim, "Quest for Building World-Class Universities in South Korea: Outcomes and Consequences," *Higher Education* 65, no. 5 (May 1, 2013): 645–59, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-012-9568-6>.

¹³ (Gao & Li, 2020)

¹⁴ Phuong Minh Luong, "Intercultural Adaptability Development for Students in Internationalisation at Home Programmes in Higher Education in China and Korea" 15, no. 2 (2025): 421–40, <https://doi.org/10.1108/HESWBL-10-2023-0284>; Xiaoying Jiang, "Internationalization of Higher Education under the Belt and Road Initiatives," *Beijing International Review of Education* 3 (2021): 38–55, <https://doi.org/10.1163/25902539-03010003>; Phan Le Ha and Meng Liu, "'We Have No Chinese Classmates': International Students, Internationalization, and Medium of Instruction in Chinese Universities," *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics* 44, no. 2 (2021): 180–207, <https://doi.org/10.1075/ara1.20091.liu>.

¹⁵ Ka Ho Mok and Simon Marginson, "Massification, Diversification and Internationalisation of Higher Education in China: Critical Reflections of Developments in the Last Two Decades," *International Journal of Educational Development* 84 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2021.102405>.

¹⁶ Zhiqiang Zhao, Ping Ren, and Min Tang, "Analyzing the Impact of Anti-Globalization on the Evolution of Higher Education Internationalization in China," *Journal of Linguistics and Education Research* 5, no. 2 (2022): 15, <https://doi.org/10.30564/jler.v5i2.5552>.

¹⁷ (Gao & Li, 2020)

¹⁸ (Gao & Li, 2020; Li, 2020; Zhong et al., 2023)

¹⁹ (Gao & Li, 2020; Zhong et al., 2023)

the country to be the leading player in the international higher education system²⁰ by establishing both leading universities and leading disciplines by 2050²¹.

The strategies Chinese government employed in internationalization of higher education has changed remarkably in response to the country's unique political, economic, and social conditions²². The movement is also recognized as important to boost China's economic competitiveness²³ and led to the creation of International Branch Campuses (IBCs), which have rapidly emerged as a key aspect of transnational higher education over the last two decades²⁴.

As outlined above, China has adopted numerous policies and strategies aimed at promoting the internationalization of its higher education system for quite some time. Meanwhile, Indonesia has relative few and more recent policies and strategies in this regard. In its endeavors to advance the internationalization of higher education, the government of Indonesia has enacted several key regulations and policy frameworks aimed at fostering global engagement, enhancing institutional competitiveness, and aligning national education standards with international benchmarks. The Directorate General of Higher Education (DGHE), Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia, compiled the Higher Education Long Term Strategi (HELTS) 2003-2010 as an effort to increase the role of higher education in Indonesia in the context of global competition to strengthen the nation's competitiveness²⁵. Following this policy, the Indonesian government also launched the Law No. 12 of 2012 on Higher Education, which, in Article 50, Paragraph 1, explicitly allows universities to engage in international cooperation. These collaborations are intended to integrate global perspectives into the areas of education, teaching, and service, while still preserving and promoting the core values of Indonesian culture and identity. Building on this, the Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education set an ambitious agenda in its 2015-2019 strategic plan, targeting the transformation of Indonesian universities into WCUs (Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education, 2015). A key indicator of success for this initiative was the inclusion of Indonesian institutions among the top 500 universities in global rankings, a goal aimed at elevating Indonesia's academic reputation and influence on world stage²⁶.

Various internationalization efforts were also initiated independently by Indonesian universities, both public and private, in an ad-hoc and fragmented

²⁰ Gaoming Zheng and Weiwei Li, "Critical Policy Analysis of the Second Round of the Double First-Class Project in China," *ECNU Review of Education* (SAGE Publications Ltd, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.1177/20965311241265372>.

²¹ (Gao & Li, 2020; Kang & Mok, 2024; Zheng & Li, 2024)

²² Kang and Mok, "China's Policy Responses to University Ranking: Changes and New Challenges"; Zhenyang Xu, "Whiteness as World-Class Education?: Internationalization as Depicted by Western International Branch Campuses in China," *Higher Education* 85, no. 4 (April 1, 2023): 919-36, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-022-00872-2>.

²³ Li, "Factors Influencing Chinese Students' Choice of an International Branch Campus: A Case Study."

²⁴ Xu, "Whiteness as World-Class Education?: Internationalization as Depicted by Western International Branch Campuses in China."

²⁵ Directorate General of Higher Education, 2004)

²⁶ Noni Srijati Kusumawati, Ismi Dwi Astuti Nurhaeni, and Rino A. Nugroho, "Internationalization of Indonesia Higher Education: Does Government Support?," *International Journal of Education and Social Science Research* 03, no. 01 (2020): 173-80, <https://doi.org/10.37500/ijessr.2020.3015>.

manner²⁷. Initiatives included curriculum development and international benchmarking, the establishment of double degree and sandwich programs, and increased international exposure through short-term study abroad opportunities. Other measures involved joint supervision of master's and Ph.D. students, the creation of international undergraduate programs, and promoting outbound mobility for one to two semesters abroad. Additionally, universities sought to attract international students and faculty, facilitate academic and scholar exchanges, engage in collaborative research and joint publications, and pursue international accreditation for academic programs.

b) Curriculum and Cultural Integration

China's current educational model seeks to establish world-class universities infused with Chinese characteristics, incorporating elements from both traditional and contemporary practices²⁸. Chinese philosophy, particularly Confucianism and Daoism, offers valuable insights, such as overcoming the theory/practice divide seen in Euro-American universities, and a deep understanding of the relationship between humans, nature, and society²⁹. As stated earlier that Confucian values have been shaped the modern Chinese educational system. Various aspects of education, including purpose, method, subject matter, and moral³⁰, as well as learning models, cultural beliefs, and learning processes³¹ have been significantly influenced by Confucianism.

Confucian education emphasizes the lifelong process of self-cultivation, focused on teaching an individual the five core virtues: benevolence, righteousness, ritual, wisdom, and trustworthiness³². Moreover, the influence of Confucianism is evident in the emphasis on moral development, self-control and introspection, social harmony, and respect for authority within educational practices³³, as well as the promotion of the method of memorization³⁴. Confucian values are also reflected in the roles of Chinese scholars who linked knowledge to social and national well-being making Chinese scholars balanced their dual roles as political and academic figures, striving for academic autonomy while supporting the state³⁵.

²⁷ Intan Ahmad, "From Institutional Initiatives to National Policies Internationalization in Higher Education," 2023, 1-15.

²⁸ Wen Wen and Simon Marginson, "GOVERNANCE IN CHINESE UNIVERSITIES," in *Research in the Sociology of Organizations*, vol. 86 (Emerald Publishing, 2023), 171-97, <https://doi.org/10.1108/S0733-558X2023000086008>.

²⁹ Wen and Marginson.

³⁰ Marinette Bahtilla and Hui Xu, "The Influence of Confucius's Educational Thoughts on China's Educational System," *OALib* 08, no. 05 (2021): 1-17, <https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.1107370>.

³¹ Canglong Wang, "Resurgence of Confucian Education in Contemporary China: Parental Involvement, Moral Anxiety, and the Pedagogy of Memorisation," *Journal of Moral Education* 52, no. 3 (2023): 325-42, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240.2022.2066639>.

³² Wang.

³³ Bahtilla and Xu, "The Influence of Confucius's Educational Thoughts on China's Educational System."

³⁴ Wang, "Resurgence of Confucian Education in Contemporary China: Parental Involvement, Moral Anxiety, and the Pedagogy of Memorisation."

³⁵ Shuangmiao Han and Xin Xu, "How Far Has the State 'Stepped Back': An Exploratory Study of the Changing Governance of Higher Education in China (1978-2018)," *Higher Education* 78, no. 5 (November 1, 2019): 931-46, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-019-00378-4>.

In the context of internationalizing higher education in China, Tianxia also underscores the importance of integrating diverse cultural perspectives into the curriculum. China's unique understanding of the state, society, and global world (Tianxia) positions it on a different trajectory from the West. In this regard, Wen and Marginson (2032) suggest that to contribute more globally, Chinese higher education and the state must adopt policies that foster a space for diverse knowledge and ideas, promoting both indigenous and global knowledge for the benefit of global society. China's ability to merge indigenous values with Western educational practices reflect its capacity to amalgamate diverse influences and generate innovative approaches, which can be recognized as a strength of the nation.

Furthermore, the internationalization of higher education in China is largely driven by the widespread use of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI). EMI has supported the growth of transnational education programs, bilingual degrees, and international student enrollment³⁶. EMI aligns with global trends in neoliberal higher education, enhancing China's global rankings, academic prestige, and soft power³⁷. Thus, the use of EMI has helped position China as a rising global education hub, while also serving diplomatic goals by attracting students worldwide. EMI also contributes to intercultural competence of the students by facilitating language acquisition, international interaction, and global awareness. Studies show that learning English encourages Chinese students to reflect on traditional values and adopt a more global outlook³⁸.

Another aspect contribute to intercultural competence of Chinese students is interaction with international students. Studies identified that intercultural interaction with international peers is positively associated with Chinese students' global and intercultural development³⁹. In addition, meaningful engagement with international students can be an effective and equitable strategy for developing intercultural competence among all students, including those without access to study abroad opportunities⁴⁰. In this regard, international students serve as key contributors to creating globally aware and culturally sensitive learning environments in Chinese universities. To attract international students from foreign countries, nation branding plays a crucial role; however, research in this area remains limited⁴¹.

Similar to China, which incorporates its philosophical values into the higher education curriculum, Indonesia also embeds its national philosophy in its academic programs. In its efforts to internationalize higher education, Indonesia place great emphasis on preserving national identity, language, and values. This creates richness in curriculum development. In addition to cultural preservation, curriculum development in Indonesian higher education is also guided by the principles of

³⁶ Le Ha and Liu, "We Have No Chinese Classmates': International Students, Internationalization, and Medium of Instruction in Chinese Universities."

³⁷ Le Ha and Liu.

³⁸ You Zhang, "Rethinking Internationalization at Home from a System Perspective: Evidence from China's Higher Education Institutions," *International Journal of Chinese Education* 11, no. 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1177/2212585X221095881>.

³⁹ Zhang.

⁴⁰ Zhang.

⁴¹ Salman Yousaf, Xiucheng Fan, and Fahad Laber, "Branding China through the Internationalization of Higher Education Sector: An International Students' Perspective from China," *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education* 30, no. 2 (2020): 161-79, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08841241.2019.1710890>.

quality assurance and relevance. Higher education laws and government regulations play a central role in regulating curriculum policies, ensuring that they align with national goals and global standards⁴². The curriculum development process also involves in-depth studies, evaluations, and consultations with stakeholders to address the dynamic needs of the job market and societal demands⁴³.

In its efforts to align with global educational standards while preserving local cultural values, the government of Indonesia launched the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM, The Freedom to Learn) program in 2020. This initiative emphasizes flexibility, adaptability, and real-world application of knowledge⁴⁴. This program allows students to engage in experiential learning through off-campus activities, including internships, research, and community service. This program also fosters global competencies and prepares graduates for the international job market⁴⁵ and global competitiveness⁴⁶.

The MBKM program equips students with essential competencies for navigating the challenges of the industry 4.0 era and the transition toward society 5.0, including 21st-century skills such as data literacy, technological literacy, and human literacy⁴⁷. This program also promotes student mobility and aims to foster intellectual freedom. Ultimately, it seeks to cultivate competitive individuals, those who are healthy, intelligent, adaptive, creative, innovative, skilled, dignified, productive, and possess strong character ground in the values of Pancasila⁴⁸. Pancasila is the foundational philosophical theory of the Indonesia state, consisting of five core principles that reflect the nation's values, identity, and guiding ideology. The five core principles are: (1) Belief in One Supreme God; (2) Just and Civilized Humanity; (3) The Unity of Indonesia; (4) Democracy Guided by the Inner Wisdom in the Unanimity Arising out of Deliberations among Representatives; and (5) Social Justice for All the People of Indonesia.

c) Challenges and Opportunities

The internationalization of higher education has become a key strategic priority for China, aimed at enhancing the quality and global competitiveness of its academic institutions while expanding the country's influence on the international stage. This process, however, is accompanied by a complex interplay of opportunities

⁴² (Latif et al., 2024)

⁴³ (Latif et al., 2024)

⁴⁴ Yusriadi Yusriadi, Umi Farida, and Misnawati Misnawati, "'Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka' Policies in Indonesia Higher Education Institutions: New Public Policy Reform," *Al-Tanzim: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 8, no. 1 (2024): 344–60, <https://doi.org/10.33650/al-tanzim.v8i1.7173>; Eristian Wibisono and Etik Umiyati, "Kampus Merdeka (Independent Campus) Policy in Indonesia: A Brief Overview," *Kwangsan: Jurnal Teknologi Pendidikan* 11, no. 1 (2023): 255, <https://doi.org/10.31800/jtp.kw.v11n1.p255--278>.

⁴⁵ Muhammad Darwinsyah et al., "Implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka Program on Curriculum Management and Human Resources at Universitas Muhammadiyah Jakarta" 03, no. 12 (2024): 1537–46, <https://doi.org/10.58806/ijsshmr.2024.v3i12n01>.

⁴⁶ Wibisono and Umiyati, "Kampus Merdeka (Independent Campus) Policy in Indonesia: A Brief Overview."

⁴⁷ Dian Samitra and Satinem, "Penguatan Implementasi Permendikbudristek No 52 Tahun 2023 Pada Kurikulum Di Universitas PGRI Silampari," *DEVOTE: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat Global* 3, no. 3 (2024): 146–51.

⁴⁸ Samitra and Satinem.

and challenges that continue to define the evolution of its higher education landscape.

According to Zhao et al. (2022), several significant challenges hinder China's internationalization efforts, involving geopolitical tensions and resource constraints. In their study, Zhao et al. (2022) identified that the deteriorating diplomatic relations and increasing mistrust between China and some Western countries becomes an obstacle to internationalization endeavors of the country. These tensions have created barriers to academic collaboration and joint programs as well as events. In addition, resource constraints, including limited financial investment and shortages of qualified international education professionals, pose further obstacles to sustaining and expanding internationalization initiatives across Chinese universities.

Despite these challenges, Zhao et al. (2022) also identifies several opportunities that position China to play a more prominent role in the global higher education landscape. One such opportunity lies in China's growing ability to shape global education discourse and policy, offering alternative models of international collaboration and academic development. With its expanding economic influence, continued investments in higher education quality, and increasing availability of government-sponsored scholarships, China has become an increasingly attractive destination for students, particularly those from Global South countries seeking affordable and high-quality educational opportunities.

Furthermore, the study of Zhao et al. (2022) found that Chinese universities are contributing meaningfully to addressing global challenges, such as technology innovation, through international research collaborations and academic exchanges. These efforts not only enhance China's academic reputation but also promote mutual understanding and shared problem-solving on a global scale.

The implementation of internationalization policies in Indonesian higher education faces several significant challenges. One of the primary obstacles is the dynamic and frequently shifting regulatory landscape, which often leads to inconsistencies in policy enforcement⁴⁹. Additionally, Abduh, et al. (2018) identify two main categories of barriers: cultural and practical. Cultural challenges stem from the underdevelopment of academic and intellectual culture among faculty, students, and administrative staff. In this regard, they found limited academic activities, such as seminars and workshops that are essential to supporting internationalization efforts, primary due to financial constraints. These findings are consistent with Lambey et al. (2024) study that identifies the absence of comprehensive national programs designed to facilitate internationalization of higher education. Furthermore, Lambey et al. (2024) highlight that government spending on education in Indonesia remains relatively low compared to other countries in the region, posing another significant barrier to advancing internationalization of higher education.

In addition, Abduh et al. (2018) identified practical challenges related to the limited English language proficiency among lecturers teaching in international programs. Similarly, Lambey et al. (2024) emphasized that inadequate English competency among both academic staff and students poses a significant barrier to employability, research development, and the broader internationalization of higher education.

⁴⁹ Linda Lambey et al., "Challenges and Opportunities to Internationalize the Indonesian Higher Education Sector," 2024, <https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.110658>.

Another major challenge is the insufficient collaboration between higher education institutions and external stakeholders, such as industry partners and international institutions⁵⁰. This lack of collaboration restricts opportunities for student mobility, joint research, and the establishment of globally competitive academic programs. Lambey et al. (2024) supports this view, noting that limited partnerships with private sector entities, who could potentially invest in education and contribute to building a skilled and professional workforce, remains a persistent obstacle in advancing the internationalization of higher education in Indonesia.

Conclusion

The network visualization illustrates that a broader and more diverse set of issues has been explored in the context of China compared to Indonesia. China has a well-developed and centralized policy framework driven by the government such as the Double First-Class Project (DFC) as well as Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). It also has strategic partnerships with top universities worldwide, participation in global university rankings, and transnational education are emphasized. Meanwhile, Indonesia has been actively pursuing the internationalization of its higher education system through various policies and practices aimed at enhancing global competitiveness, fostering academic collaboration, and attracting international students.

Cross-cultural approaches in higher education hold significant value, particularly for nations such as China and Indonesia, for multiple key reasons:

- a) Addressing the challenges of globalization. Globalization introduces rapid changes in the economy, technology, and societal structures. Higher education must equip students with a global perspective to compete effectively in a more interconnected environment. China and Indonesia, being swiftly advancing nations, need to adjust education systems to remain relevant at the international level.
- b) Enhancing university competitiveness and collaboration. Employing a cross-cultural approach enables universities to draw in a larger number of international scholars and students. Collaboration with overseas institutions also boosts the university's reputation and its global ranking. Several programs, such as the DFC Project in China encourages universities to become world-class through international collaboration on an international level. Meanwhile, the MBKM program highlights the significance of facilitating exchanges between students and faculty members among universities internationally.
- c) Enriching academic perspectives and innovation. Interaction between different academic cultures encourages innovation in both research and instructional techniques. In China, the influence of Confucianism continues to play a significant role in education, whereas in Indonesia, the principles of Pancasila help define the higher education system.
- d) Establishing global understanding and educational diplomacy. Cross-cultural education helps reduce misunderstandings between countries and strengthens diplomatic relations. China has programs such as International Branch

⁵⁰ Humiras Betty Marlina Sihombing and Jelita Panjaitan, "Challenges in Implementing the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka in High-Er Education," *International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research* 4, no. 8 (2023): 2716–23, <https://doi.org/10.11594/ijmaber.04.08.04>.

Campuses that bolster scholarly partnerships internationally. Indonesia also maintains academic relationships with many countries, including joint degree program and research collaboration.

Both China and Indonesia encounter challenges in implementing a cross-cultural approach in higher education. Some of the key obstacles include:

a) Limited human resource capacity.

Both China and Indonesia face challenges in human resource development for internationalization. China experiences a shortage of qualified international education professionals, while in Indonesia, the limited use of English as a medium of instruction continues to be a barrier in fully engaging with global academic standards.

b) Regulatory and policy constraints. In China, the government maintains substantial control over key aspects of higher education institutions. In Indonesia, strict regulatory frameworks often impede collaboration with foreign universities, slowing the pace of internationalization.

c) Funding limitations. Financial constraints remain a major obstacle for Indonesia in expanding its internationalization agenda. Limited government investment and scarce institutional resources restrict the ability of universities to support mobility programs, international research collaboration, and infrastructure needed for global engagement. This issue is also evident in China.

Nevertheless, there are notable prospects to take advantage of, such as strengthening academic collaboration between Chinese and Indonesian Universities. In summary, cross-cultural approaches in higher education not only enhance academic quality but also strengthen economic competitiveness and international relations. For nations like China and Indonesia, which hold strategic positions in Asia, a learning environment that is receptive to global perspectives will be the key to future success. The current study suggests the importance of examining the learning environment in both countries to better understand areas that need improvement in each country to meet global demand.

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